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International Narcotics Biweekly Review

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INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS BIWEEKLY REVIEW

5 July 1978

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Lebanese and Syrian authorities have been
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This publication is prepared by analysts in the National Foreign Assessment Center
for specialists in the Washington community who are interested in international
narcotics matters. Comments and queries are welcome.

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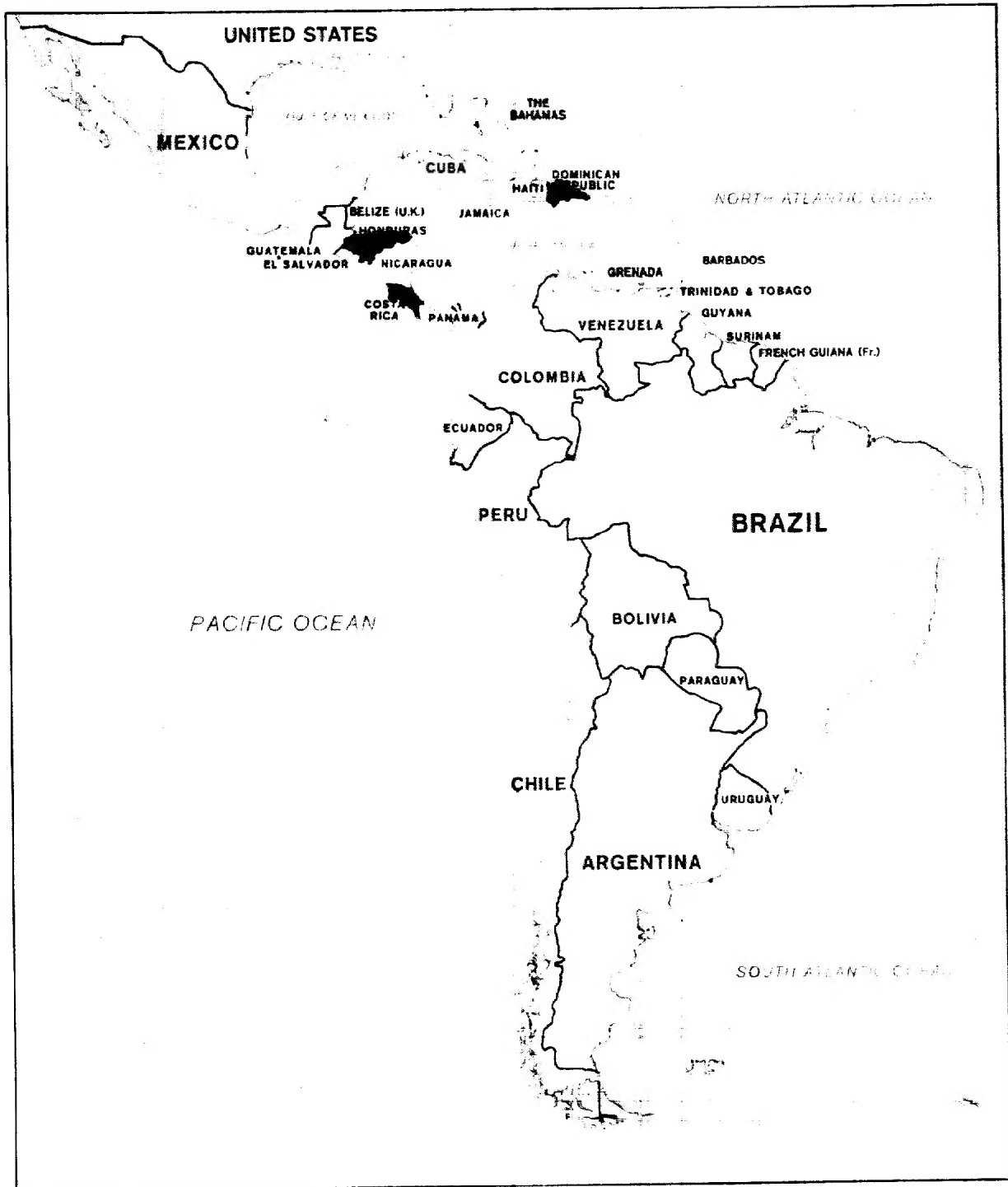
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CARIBBEAN/CENTRAL AMERICA: New Regions For Drug Trafficking

US interest in drug control in Latin America continues to focus on such traditional production and transshipment regions as Mexico and the Andean republics of South America. An increasing volume of narcotics, however, may be passing through the Caribbean Islands and Central America, but this is a supposition based on fragmentary information.

As enforcement becomes more effective in other countries, the pattern of narcotics trafficking will be forced to shift. There are a variety of reasons why such a shift would be toward the Caribbean and Central America. For one, the paucity of equipment and manpower in the island republics and Central America severely handicaps enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the thousands of remote islands, unpatrolled waterways, extensive coastlines, clandestine airstrips, and unguarded borders facilitate the entry and exit of traffickers and cargoes of narcotics. Finally, the generally depressed economy of both areas, coupled with the institutionalized system of corruption and graft among government and military leaders, enables drug smugglers to curry favor or buy protection from officials eager to grab a percentage of the lucrative profits.

Because of this is a relatively new area of concern the CIA has no definitive information that permits a suspected increase in drug trafficking to be measured. The exact nature and scope of drug activity, therefore, remains uncertain. We can, however, briefly discuss some of the various political factors in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and Honduras that have implications for the drug situation.

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Dominican Republic

The extent of drug traffic through the Dominican Republic is unknown, but the widespread corruption of the 12-year Balaguer administration--especially among high-ranking military officers--provides a conducive climate. Graft, bribery, and rake-offs have become commonplace, and there is little reason to expect that the incoming administration will overturn tradition. President-elect Guzman ran on an anticorruption platform and may well be personally inclined to cooperate in efforts to halt the drug traffic, but he will have little room to maneuver as he tries to neutralize the suspicious military establishment and to check the corrupt inclinations of some of his own "hungry" supporters.

Costa Rica

Neither the CIA nor DEA has information that Costa Rica has been or is becoming a major transshipment point for South American cocaine and marijuana. Recent news articles and editorials in the Costa Rican press, however, suggest the role that some of the citizenry believe their country plays in the international drug trade.

According to the press, Lt. Colonel Guillermo Vargas Mora, director general of the narcotics department of the Ministry of Public Security, believes that Costa Rica is a "drug bridge" between North and South America. He cites the limited enforcement resources of his country, plus over 200 unsupervised airstrips, as encouraging and facilitating drug smuggling in Costa Rica.

Prospects for US bilateral drug control efforts with Costa Rica are good. President Carazo--who led his opposition Unity coalition to victory in the election earlier this year--favors close ties and continuing cooperation with Washington. During his campaign, Carazo spoke out against crime and other urban problems, another indication that he would support US drug control initiatives.

Honduras

Large quantities of marijuana and cocaine recently have been interdicted in Honduras, giving rise to intense interest in the local press and to speculation that the

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country has become a major transshipment channel for narcotics into the US. It is difficult to assess the present level of trafficking, however, because of incomplete records on previous arrests and seizures and insufficient data on current drug networks.

Honduran press reports of corruption in the military and of the armed forces' involvement in the kidnap/murder of narcotics traffickers have helped uncover a major drug scandal. As a result, a high-level military commission began an investigation in April to "uncover and punish" any officer or government official associated with drug trafficking.

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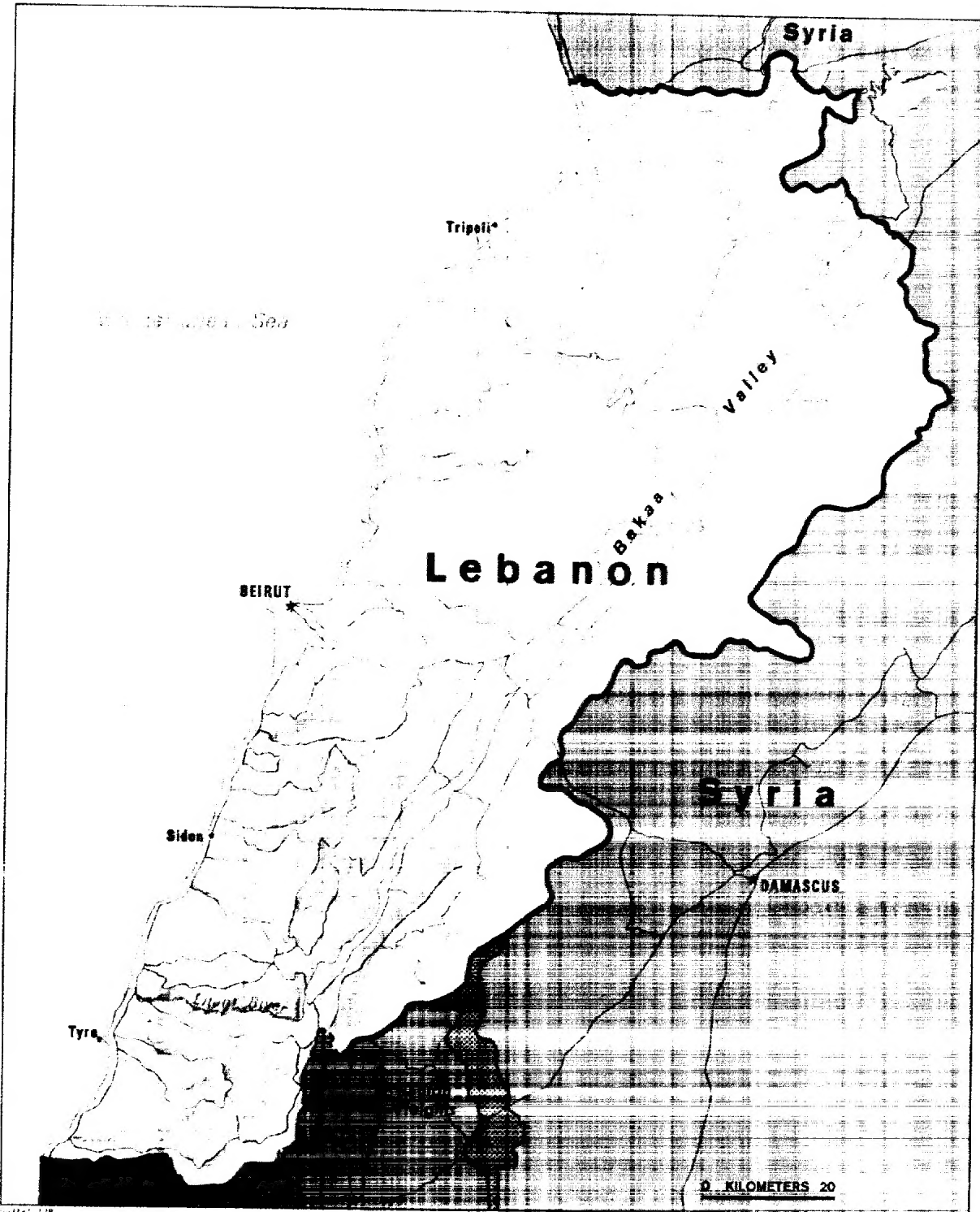
[REDACTED] Not surprisingly, the commission publicly announced that its investigation had uncovered no military involvement in the scandal. Military leaders--who justified their takeover in 1975 by pledging an end to corruption--apparently have chosen to chance an outburst of public indignation rather than weaken their position by divulging incriminating details.

Given the aggressive nature of the Honduran press, it is unlikely that the military will be able to prevent the identities of the guilty officers from ultimately becoming public. Moreover, the risks inherent in smuggling drugs in Honduras have increased as a result of the seizures, the investigation, and the public spotlight focused on narcotics. Still, no major traffickers have been arrested, no key networks have been dismantled. It appears likely, therefore, that trafficking will continue and that as yet undiscovered networks will become more proficient and prolific. [REDACTED] 25X1

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LEBANON: Troops Destroy Opium Poppy Fields

Press reports from Beirut claim that Lebanese Army and police units, supported by Syrian troops stationed in the Bekaa Valley, have destroyed 180 acres of opium poppies planted in the area. Other sources confirm that the raids took place, but put the acreage destroyed somewhat lower.

Lebanese and Syrian authorities have been concerned about the spread of opium poppy plantings in the Bekaa and were particularly apprehensive about the presence of outsiders in the area. Lebanese newspapers have raised the specter of Mafia involvement

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Reports of opium poppy cultivation in the Bekaa area first surfaced in 1976. Lebanese Agriculture Ministry officials reported that acreage planted in poppies in 1977 was small--perhaps as low as 25 acres--but predicted the amount would rise owing to the profitability of the opium crop. A Drug Enforcement Agency official visited the Bekaa area in late 1977, but could not confirm these estimates.

The Lebanese-Syrian force carefully avoided any action against the extensive hashish plantings in the Bekaa. Lebanese authorities have traditionally turned a blind eye toward the hashish trade--which is dominated by politically powerful figures--and the Syrians have been reluctant to get involved.

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NOTEWORTHY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

(Editor's Note: These items, produced for other CIA publications, do not deal specifically with the international narcotics situation. They are included here because they concern developing situations that could impact on the international narcotics control effort.)

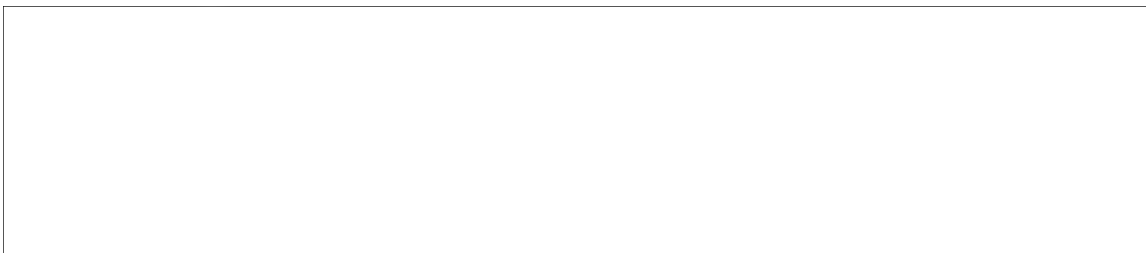


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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Postelection Tension Continues

The Dominican Republic remains uneasy because of delays in the official certification of Antonio Guzman's victory in the presidential election last month as a result of legal challenges and administrative haggling. The challenges--pushed primarily by National Police Chief Neit Nivar--have not affected the widespread popular belief that Guzman won fairly. Official results will probably be announced this week.

Early last month, leaders of the military establishment met with Guzman and publicly pledged to back his administration after he agreed to hold his leftist supporters in check and not interfere with the armed forces. Nonetheless, a faction led by Major General Neit Nivar, the chief of the national police, continued a backstairs campaign to block certification of Guzman's election and stir up anti-Communist sentiment favorable to new elections. Nivar masterminded the military intervention that briefly halted the vote count last May and has long been a central figure in the corruption surrounding the Balaguer government.



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In the past month, Balaguer's diehard supporters--backed by Nivar--have succeeded in ousting both the chairman and the secretary of the Central Electoral Commission and have swamped it with legal challenges that have blocked the official declaration of a winner. In an apparent effort at intimidation, Nivar's police temporarily detained the head of the commission's computer center and, according to the press, have remained at the center to monitor the final tabulations. Last Monday, an unidentified group raided the commission and stole several thousand voter identification and registration cards.

For his part, Balaguer has publicly congratulated Guzman and has received him three times in the national palace since the election. Their most recent meeting on 17 June was well publicized and undoubtedly helped ease public fears. Balaguer has also authorized his apparent successor to visit various government departments and has assigned security protection for both Guzman and his running mate. Moreover, the President has strongly opposed a Nivar-backed effort to ram through promilitary legislation without the approval of the new administration and has flatly rejected Nivar's attempt to have a rival general dismissed.

Nevertheless, Balaguer has not called off Nivar or restrained ruling-party extremists, who he apparently believes deserve their day in court. Balaguer is aware of the uneasiness but still refuses to intervene directly. He told the US Ambassador that he fully expects to step down in August, but that legal challenges aimed primarily at congressional and municipal returns should run their course in accordance with the constitution. He also expressed complete confidence in his control of the military which is seriously divided by factional rivalries.

Balaguer's ambivalence will keep tensions high among a population that generally accepts the unofficial Guzman victory but continues to suspect behind-the-scenes maneuvering. The majority of the military and most political forces favor a peaceful transition and are almost certain to increase pressure on Balaguer to resolve the confusion. They especially want him to rein in Nivar, whose provocative actions could lead to civil conflict.

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Noteworthy Political and
Economic Developments

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MALAYSIA: Election Preview

On the eve of a national parliamentary election and 10 state elections, the position of Prime Minister Hussein Onn and the 10-party ruling National Front he leads is fairly secure. Malaysia's sound economy combined with a fragmented political opposition will probably produce a strong Front showing. Nevertheless, latent racial tension and strains between conservative and moderate Malays might cut into Front strength, particularly that of Hussein's own party, the United Malays National Organization. Hussein's postponement until after the election of the UMNO General Assembly--at which he expects to be confirmed as party president--suggests that these divisions have already affected the Prime Minister's election strategy.

Although the legal deadline for the next election was not until late 1979, Hussein's decision to call one for 8 July came as no surprise. Malaysia's economy, which has grown impressively in 1978, is expected to slow down by next year. Moreover, the two opposition parties of any significance--the conservative Malay Islamic Party (PAS) and the Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP)--are both at low points. PAS was soundly defeated in the Kelantan State election last March by UMNO and Berjasa, a non-Front Malay party that worked closely with UMNO. The DAP has suffered from internal leadership struggles.

Hussein's record on issues other than economic ones will also work to the Front's favor. The Prime Minister has won general approval for working to reduce communal tensions, cracking down on corruption, stepping up operations against Communist insurgency, and promoting friendly relations with Communist nations--including Vietnam and Cambodia--while remaining neutral in the Sino-Soviet

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rivalry and reiterating Malaysia's desire to gain international recognition of Southeast Asia as a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality.

What is less clear is why Hussein chose to postpone the UMNO General Assembly--originally scheduled for 22-25 June, a period now included in the 17-day campaign leading up to the election. Hussein, who has been acting president of UMNO since assuming the premiership on the death of his predecessor in early 1976, probably would have preferred to be confirmed as UMNO leader before starting to campaign. This would not only have enhanced his political standing nationally, but would have given him a freer hand to shift or remove certain UMNO members in the cabinet whose views Hussein does not share.

The election announcement and simultaneous postponement of the UMNO General Assembly earlier this month may reflect increasing uncertainty on Hussein's part over a harmonious UMNO convention. One element of UMNO in particular--the Youth League--is angry over Hussein's refusal to pardon former Youth League President Harun and renounce plans for establishing a predominantly Chinese university. Although this group would not threaten Hussein's chances for the party presidency, it might embarrass him by nominating someone else or staging a walkout.

A strong showing nationally may not ensure a smooth UMNO convention, but it would probably minimize acrimony. Hussein has moved to prevent flareups of racial tension and charges of government favoritism toward Chinese during the campaign. The government has stepped up naval patrols to minimize the number of refugees arriving from Indochina--many of whom increasingly have been Chinese--and it has banned all rallies during the campaign period. The government's arrest in April of the DAP chairman for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act--although done after a thorough, two-year investigation--may also have been aimed at currying favor with the Malay electorate while discrediting a Chinese opposition leader among non-Malay voters.

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PERU: Constituent Assembly Election Results

Based on unofficial returns, Peru's two main contending parties received 63 percent of the vote in the constituent assembly election on 18 June. Victor Haya de la Torre's moderate leftist American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) captured 36 seats in the 100-seat assembly, and Luis Bedoya's more conservative Popular Christian Party garnered 27.

Six extreme leftist parties won a surprising 30 percent of the vote in what appears to have been a protest against the economic austerity program of the military government.

Plans for postelection cooperation between the two major parties in the assembly--which will begin work next month on a new constitution--are already well advanced. Octogenarian Haya de la Torre reportedly will be selected as assembly president. The two parties earlier expressed confidence that they would have little trouble overriding radical leftist assemblymen on basic constitutional questions, but the strong showing by the left in the balloting could make assembly deliberations more difficult than expected.

Besides drafting the constitution--which could take only five or six months--the assembly will provide an important link between the military government and the political parties to smooth the way for the transition to civilian rule, now scheduled for 1980.

The Peruvian military is said to be increasingly weary of governing and could call presidential and legislative elections early next year. This could permit a civilian government to be installed next summer,

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but both military and civilian political leaders are reluctant to effect the transition until the economy is stabilized. Much, therefore, depends on the military government's handling of the economic crisis.

Peru's need for loans to meet debt service obligations is critical, but the International Monetary Fund and private banks have adopted a wait-and-see attitude following the imposition of the austerity program in May. This has forced the central bank to conclude an \$85-million swap arrangement with its counterparts in Venezuela, Brazil, Spain, Mexico, and Argentina.

The swap arrangement will help temporarily, but Peru intends to refinance \$6.14 billion in medium- and long-term public and private sector debt. Without refinancing, annual payments for the next three years on public debt alone would exceed 50 percent of the value of Peru's exports.

For the democratization plan of President Morales Bermudez to succeed, the government will have to contain social unrest among a populace already financially hard-pressed by successive austerity programs. The new civilian economic team appointed in May will also have to provide imaginative solutions for the country's economic malaise, including restimulating the beleaguered private sector.

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BRIEFS

ECUADOR: INCREASED EVIDENCE THAT PRESIDENT POVEDA IS PERSONALLY COMMITTED TO A NARCOTICS CONTROL CAMPAIGN. Several events in recent weeks appear to be directly related to, or will have an impact on, Quito's announced "war" on drugs. These developments include: (1) the dismissal of several judges on grounds of narcotics-related corruption; (2) the removal of the head of the National Police Narcotics Service in Quito and the chief of police in Guayaquil; (3) the resignation of the subsecretary of government who was the mission's primary contact on narcotics matters; and (4) a high-level expression of interest in stopping the shipment of illicit drugs aboard Ecuadorean flag ships. The Embassy believes that, although all of the results of these events will not necessarily be positive and they do not reflect an unalloyed antinarcotics effort, they are evidence that President Poveda's commitment to a "war" on drugs is more than just rhetoric. The Embassy views the removal of the NPNS chief and the dismissal of the judges as the most positive evidence to date that the Government of Ecuador is serious about its antinarcotics effort. Although the Embassy regards the new evidence of high-level dedication as encouraging, it cautions that it remains to be seen whether this high-level dedication can overcome underlying institutional inertia and corruption.

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HONDURAS: COMMISSION COMPLETES INVESTIGATION OF MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. The high-level Honduran commission created to investigate alleged involvement of several active and former military officers in international narcotics trafficking has concluded its investigation and issued a communique. This statement, which was made public on 24 June, claimed that the investigation showed that "no officer on active duty" was involved in the alleged narcotics scandal. The communique did note, however, that, in carrying out its investigation, the commission had established that some members of the armed forces may have committed "irregularities" in carrying out their duties, and that they will be subject to military justice. Names and the details of the investigation were not made public.

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25X1 [redacted] it
seems inevitable that further information concern-
ing the drug scandal linking military officers with
narcotics will become public knowledge. [redacted]
25X1 [redacted] the ongoing speculation involving military
personalities can only lead to increased public
pressure for a full investigation of alleged gov-
ernment misdeeds, placing an even heavier strain on
the regime. The Embassy notes that the communique
attempts to make "a molehill out of a mountain" of
speculation and charges which have occupied public
attention since last December. It notes further
that whether the downplay of alleged military in-
volvement in narcotics trafficking is successful
will depend on the strength of public reaction and
whether further incriminating information leaks out.
[redacted]

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ITALY: DRUG ABUSE BECOMING MORE SERIOUS IN THE ITALIAN
ARMED SERVICES. The spread of drug use in the bar-
racks has become a growing concern among Italian
military leaders, according to a recent attache re-
port from Rome. The Minister of Defense admitted
a few months ago that drug use among the Italian
military was increasing. The attache report notes
that probable causes of the increased drug use in-
clude excessive fatigue, idleness, unsuitability
for military service, and frustration, as well as
hardship and danger. A young Italian doctor, who has
followed the drug problem during his military serv-
ice, claims that Italian servicemen involved with
drugs are now turning from marijuana and hashish to
hard drugs. As a control measure, the Italian mili-
tary is increasing surveillance in military hospitals,
especially in those where methadone and heroin are
most readily accessible. The growing problem of
drug addiction within the armed services is said to
reflect the growing drug abuse problem in the coun-
try as a whole, where it is now acknowledged to be
a major social problem. Even though the percentage
of drug abusers within the military is still less
than the percentage of users throughout the country,
concern is growing among the military leadership.

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BAHAMAS--Bahamian Drug Arrests--TNDD, No. L/7849, 22 June 1978, p. 26. Bahamian police recently seized 200 pounds of cocaine valued at some \$100 million. A former minister of the government has also been arrested on drug smuggling charges unrelated to this seizure.

BANGLADESH--Drugs, Rebels, and Refugees--TNDD, No. L/7861, p. 3. The initial reluctance of Burma and Bangladesh to move toward a settlement of their border problem has spawned rumors that there are forces at work beyond the control of either. According to a report in the Hong Kong Asia Week, some sort of an alliance is emerging between Burmese Communists and Bengalee and Indian border insurgents. No less ominous is another theory that centers on the drying up of traditional opium routes through Laos and Thailand. According to this view, the Arakanese, in collaboration with the Shans and the Karens of Burma, are attempting to open a drug trafficking route through Bangladesh. Both Rangoon and Dacca

*US Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) Translations on Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Published by JPRS, 1000 Glebe Road, Arlington, Va., 22201.

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seem anxious to contain the problem before third parties move in, but whether the assorted liberationists of the three border regions--Burma, Bangladesh, and India--and the hardy drug merchants of the Golden Triangle would let them is another matter.

BOLIVIA--Drug Agreements With Peru Set at Conference--
TNDD, No. L/7849, pp. 27-28. At the first sub-regional conference on illegal drug traffic, which concluded in Lima in late May, Bolivia and Peru agreed to sign agreements on programs to replace the cultivation of coca leaf in the two countries. The Andean meeting was attended by delegations from Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. Several documents, divided into legal, social, operational, and other specific areas, were approved. In the social area, the approved document makes recommendations for taking action against drug traffic in the Andean subregion.

BRAZIL--National Security Law May Cover Drug Trafficking Crimes--TNDD, No. L/7849, p. 30. The Government of Brazil may include drug trafficking among the crimes covered by the National Security Law, in accordance with a proposal from the ministers of the Superior Military Court who compose the committee formed recently to review Decree-Law 898/69, which defines crimes against security. In principle, the members believe that the transfer of jurisdiction from the civilian courts to the military will afford greater speed in the suits brought against traffickers. More importantly, they believe that military law will lend greater uniformity to the decisions. Traffickers are currently tried by the state courts of justice, which leads to a wide variety of opinions. Still at issue is whether the National Security Law should deal with questions of international narcotics trafficking or deal only with domestic trafficking.

BRUNEI--Drug Traffickers Turning to Smaller Countries--
TNDD, No. L/7849, p. 1 (Borneo Bulletin). Drug traffickers are turning from the major centers of the world to lesser known places like Brunei to carry out their illicit trade, according to the Borneo press. This point was made recently at a

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symposium on drug abuse by the staff forensic pathologist at the Singapore General Hospital. The doctor claimed traffickers were turning to smaller places to avoid the tougher laws of many of the larger countries. He also pointed out that many drug users in South Asia turned to hard drugs, especially heroin, after starting on soft drugs such as marijuana.

COLOMBIA--First Coca Plantation Described--TNDD, No. L/7861, pp. 70-71. The first organized plantation of coca plants known to exist in Colombia was discovered recently. A total of over 1,800 coca plants was counted, along with a nursery with 6,144 plants ready for planting. Also, a major crop of marijuana plants was found on a nearby plot of land. The discovery of necessary equipment has also lead Colombian authorities to believe that it was planned to set up a laboratory to refine cocaine at the same location.

COLOMBIA--Marijuana, Cocaine Major Source of Foreign Earnings--TNDD, No. L/7849, pp. 41-42 (Business Times correspondent in Bogota). Colombia's main source of foreign exchange has traditionally been coffee, but since the mid-1960s cocaine and marijuana have begun to compete, even with the recent high price of coffee beans. The Colombian Attorney General estimates that the current income from drug trafficking approximates \$8 billion annually. The article goes on to say that most experts regard this figure as too high; their estimates range from \$1 billion to \$3 billion. The article further notes that the flood of currency from illicit drugs has contributed to Colombia's grave economic problems. Not only do many of the drug dollars go straight into circulation, but the attractiveness of marijuana as a low investment, high profit, cash crop has caused a drop in food production boosting inflation. Cocaine is said to be even more difficult to control. Local narcotics officers are cited as estimating that from 3,000 to 10,000 kilograms per month of refined cocaine pass through Colombia.

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SEYCHELLES--More Effective Anti-Drug Campaign Proposed--
TNDD, No. L/7861, p. 122. According to the Minister of Labor, Health, and Welfare, drug use is becoming more and more of a threat in the Seychelles, and a more effective means will have to be found to combat narcotics trafficking there. Another official noted that six or seven years ago a drug problem was nonexistent in the Seychelles. The government first became aware of the rumors regarding drugs about the end of 1969 or the beginning of 1970. He explained that drugs were first brought in by travelers for their own use but that this usage served to introduce the drugs to the Seychellois.

SRI LANKA--Colombo New Transit Point for Drug Traffickers--
TNDD, No. L/7861, pp. 31-32. The Sri Lanka police, in collaboration with Interpol, have reportedly blown the lid off a multimillion dollar international narcotics racket. A Pakistani, a British subject, and a Canadian are believed to be involved in the trafficking scheme with a Sri Lanka citizen. Police sources claim it has been established "beyond doubt" that Colombo has become a transit point to certain Western countries for an international ring of narcotics traffickers from Thailand.

SINGAPORE--Major Drug Syndicates Avoid Singapore--
TNDD, No. L/7849, p. 19. Major drug syndicates are now bypassing Singapore because of the republic's stringent laws, including the death penalty and detention without trial. Singapore authorities claim there has been a marked decrease in heroin addiction among youths during the past few months. Official statistics show that 7,737 youths were detained in Singapore during the first three months of this year, and that the number of inmates at the Drug Rehabilitation Center has dropped to less than 3,000. Most of those arrested were repeats; official sources claimed there were no new cases of addiction during the first three months of the year. Although the syndicates reportedly were being put out of business, another breed of drug runner known as "ant pushers" has emerged. These are the traffickers who smuggle small amounts of heroin into the country, making detection difficult. The number of these "ant pushers" reportedly has mushroomed.

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THAILAND--Kuomintang Remnants Intercept Heroin Caravan for Police--TNDD, No. L/7861, p. 63. Remnants of the Kuomintang army under General Lao Lee intercepted a narcotics caravan recently on a jungle trail near Chiang Mai and seized about 12 kilograms of No. 4 heroin, according to an item in the Bangkok Post. According to police reports, the Chinese irregulars informed the Thai military about the drug caravan and offered to intercept it. The drug haul was turned over to Thai narcotics police and was airlifted to Chiang Mai.

TURKEY--Heroin Smuggling Ring Broken--TNDD, No. L/7861, p. 129. The Istanbul Narcotics Police reportedly have uncovered a smuggling ring attempting to smuggle heroin out of the country. In one seizure the heroin was concealed in a pair of shoes. The Narcotics Police have announced that they are in the process of instituting new measures to prevent narcotics from passing through Customs. The article made no mention of the source of the heroin or the country of suspected origin of the opium from which the heroin was processed. One of the Turkish traffickers had adopted the alias "Alkapon"--any similarity to the name "Al Capone" is probably highly intentional.

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